Town of Los Altos Hills

NEWSLETTER

Volume XIV, No. 1 February 1991

The Drought

Water districts which serve Los Altos Hills residents will be intensifying their water conservation campaigns over the next few months. This is necessary because the drought is becoming more serious, with virtually no precipitation in the mountains. Purissima Hills Water District customers — though very successful in reducing water use over the summer months — have been less successful this winter. As a result, the District has been fined in excess $160,000.

San Francisco is considering cutbacks as high as 50%, which would result in strong enforcement measures and significant landscape losses.

May is Water Awareness Month

The State Department of Water Resources has begun its campaign to make May a month of water awareness activities. The Department, as well as local water distributors, are working to advise residents and businesses in California that the State, and especially the Bay Area, is semi-arid. This means that residents should not think of drought as a passing phenomenon, but as a fact of California life. The motto of the May campaign is "Every Drop is Precious."

The Town's landscape ordinances recognize the impact of a semi-arid climate by recommending drought tolerant and native plantings. The Town's Environmental Design and Protection Committee and Town staff can provide valuable information on alternatives to planting lawn and water-rich landscaping.

By looking at means of reducing overall consumption, not just reducing from the limits established by a base year (1987), the Town can make a large contribution to the present and future dependability of water supplies. At issue in the May campaign is changing some Bay Area lifestyles. By being wise with water and avoiding over-use and mis-use, residents are able to affect a change in their relationship to the environment. Thinking about water as a limited resource, "precious," as the motto states, requires us all to examine our habits and their far-reaching impacts.

For more information on how you can reduce your own consumption, or make others more aware, please contact your water supplier: California Water Services Company, 968-1686 and Purissima Hills Water District, 948-1217.

Evergreen Conservation District

The Town is located within the Evergreen Conservation District. The Conservation District, a result of the drought of the 1930s, provides technical assistance to residents and communities to protect natural resources. Especially valuable to Los Altos Hills residents is the service that will help land owners draw plans to control the erosion of their land. For residents who are contemplating construction or modification of their landscaping, the District engineers and consultants can be valuable resource. The District is funded through tax assessments which are paid by all residents of the Town. Brochures and basic information are available at Town Hall. The District can be reached directly at their office in San Jose, 888 N. First Street, Room 203, (408) 288-5888.

Proper Disposal of Household Chemicals

The Town is a participating member of the Santa Clara Valley Nonpoint Source Control Program. This program is designed to identify and eliminate sources of pollution that impact local streams and the San Francisco Bay. The program has been mandated by the Federal Clean Water Act and the State Water Resources Control Board.

Nonpoint pollution is that for which no immediately identifiable source of discharge, such as sewage treatment plants, exists. Generally, the regulatory agencies identify public and private infrastructure, driveways, parking lots, lawns, and streets. The primary components of the pollution appear to be oil, anti-freeze, and fertilizer.

The Town provides a three times per year Household Hazardous Waste program at which residents may discard their oil and anti-freeze (in addition to other toxic household products, such as pesticides, paint, and drain cleaner). The fertilizer portion of the pollution can be reduced by using less, controlling irrigation to eliminate runoff, and by using natural fertilizers and not artificially created ones.

By not washing anti-freeze into the gutter and down storm drains, not dumping used oil on the ground or in creeks, and not connecting roof gutters to creeks or storm drains, the residents of the Town can substantially reduce the nonpoint pollution coming from the Hills. Regular inspection and maintenance of septic drainfields will also greatly assist in the meeting of the goals of this program.

Finally, reducing the amount of hillside erosion will ease the pollution of the streams with silt. Rather than discing the hillside for fire prevention, residents should look for alternative methods, such as mowing or grazing. If you must disc your property, please instruct the operator to remain at least ten feet from all roads and pathways. Small strips along these areas can be controlled by hand.

Notes From the Environmental Design & Protection Committee

April Earth Day

Blue bags will be available at Town Hall for this year's "Earth Day" campaign to clean up our Town's roadways. The bags will also be available on Saturday, March 9 (Los Altos Hills clean up day) from 7:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the debris box locations. Just pick up a bag, then pick up the roadside trash and leave it along designated routes for later pick up by volunteers. Many thanks to those who have worked to keep our streets clean in the past.

Anyone interested in becoming an "Adopt-a-Road" volunteer please call Town Hall at 941-7222.

Trees

Many trees are stressed because of the drought and the freeze.

Be patient – *do not prune them until spring.*

Old Oaks should be irrigated *only* near the drip line and the ground near the base should not be allowed to become moist during warm weather. Irrigation should be by the "deep watering method" (slow all day soaking), and only once or twice during the summer.

Discing

To prevent dangerous soil erosion, do not disc soil within 10 feet of the top of the banks.

Low Interest Loans for Housing Rehabilitation

The Santa Clara County Housing and Community Development (HCD) Program has expanded the services of its housing rehabilitation program to include income eligible residents in Los Altos Hills.

You may be eligible for a *low interest rehabilitation loan* to repair or make improvements to your home. Rehabilitation Loans may be used for the following:

- Painting
- Roof repair or replacement
- Plumbing repairs or replacement
- Heating system repairs or replacement
- Electrical system repairs or replacement
- Foundation and structural repairs
- General property improvements

For further information, please contact: Los Altos Hills Town Hall at 941-7222

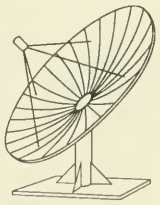
Building Fees Waived—Again—To Repair Quake Damage

The October 17, 1989, earthquake damaged a large number of homes in Town. Normal building fees were waived by the Town for those residents rebuilding or repairing damaged property. This waiver ended July 17, 1990.

At its meeting on January 8, however, the City Council decided to refund fees paid by people after the July 17 deadline and to waive future fees, probably until two years after the earthquake. The waiver does not apply to any changes you might wish to make to the original design.

Residents are still encouraged to contact Town Hall at 941-7222 as soon as possible, even if you do not plan on rebuilding right away.

Cable TV Update



Construction of the Town's cable system is almost complete. The cable operator reports that construction, installation, and direct sales activities have all gone smoothly, with minimal complaints from subscribers.

Approximately 2,162 homes are now passed by cable. As of January 18, 1810 homes had been released for direct sales, with 529 installed customers, and another 95 installations pending. Approximately 300 homes near El Monte, which are already passed by cable, do not have service available yet, due to a problem with crushed conduit and cable in a joint trench project with PG&E. However, by the time this article appears, that problem should be solved.

The cable operator is presently re-evaluating the homes in the low density "aid-to-construction" areas. Three streets have already been built under this program. Some streets may now meet minimum density requirements, and can be built without a construction surcharge.

Residents of those homes which remain in the aid-to-construction areas will receive letters shortly to determine whether they are now interested in participating in the program. The last survey was conducted in October of 1989. Cost estimates will be provided for residents expressing an interest.

Residents who would like additional information should contact Kathie Brinkman, customer service administrator for Sun Country Cable at 941-4610.

Schedule

For Residents of Incorporated Los Altos Hills Only:

Saturday, March 9, 1991
7:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Please come early as trucks will leave at 2:00 p.m.

- Town Hall parking lot (truck and debris box)
- Magdalena at IS 280 (truck and debris box)
- Foothill College – Parking lot A (truck and debris box)
- Altamont Road at Black Mountain – Westwind Barn (truck and debris box)
- Page Mill Road at Arastradero (West) (truck only)
- Mora and Eastbrook (truck and debris box)

In order to verify eligibility, you will be REQUIRED to show your driver's license to a representative of the Los Altos Garbage Company.

We will accept debris that is boxed, bagged, or bundled and easy to handle. Cuttings that are bundled no larger than 3' x 4' will be accepted at the truck stations only. Large loads of cuttings or debris that do not comply with the above will be unloaded by the resident at debris box locations only. This includes appliances, wood, furniture, etc.

Please note that yard waste should be taken to the Town Corporation Yard at 27400 Purissima Road Mondays through Saturdays, 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

For more information please call Los Altos Garbage Company at (415) 961-8040 or (408) 993-9440.

Los Altos Hills City Council

William Siegel, Mayor
Sid Hubbard, Mayor Pro Tem
Toni Casey Bob Johnson Barbara Tryon

Septic Tank Sludge Contamination

The Town's Municipal Code (§6-4.117) requires the pumping of septic tanks every four years. The importance of proper maintenance of septic tanks was made apparent during a recent survey by the Regional Water Quality Treatment Plant, in Palo Alto. During a random sampling of septic tank pump trucks, which discharge their waste into the treatment plant, it was discovered that the sludge often contained heavy metals far in excess of the limits allowed for any other discharger.

Three Los Altos Hills residences were included in the sampling. All three exceeded the limits of copper, lead, and zinc. Copper concentrations were as much as eight times the allowed limit; zinc, as much as thirty-two.

The treatment plant staff are concerned about continuing to allow the dumping of such concentrations, especially in the face of more stringent environmental regulation. Removal of the heavy metals at the treatment plant is very expensive, and the cost of removal is passed on to those Town residents who pay the annual sewer service charge either through the Los Altos Basin or the Palo Alto Basin charges on their taxes.

Failed septic systems and the continued use of toxic household chemicals can lead to groundwater contamination and other long-term environmental problems.

The Town has participated in the development of a booklet that provides alternative solutions to common household compounds that are toxic. Copies of this booklet are available at Town Hall for all residents.

Driveways and Pathways

It has come to the attention of the Pathway, Recreation & Parks Committee that a potentially hazardous situation exists in some areas of which residents may not be aware.

Initial construction of driveways requires a non-slip coating on asphalt driveways and roughening of concrete driveways as they cross over paths. However, many residents have resurfaced or repaired their driveways using material that is slippery. A number of accidents have occured where horses and their riders have slipped on these driveways and injuries have occured.

If you have recently resurfaced your driveway, plan to do so in the future, or are presently in the process, the Town recommends a non-slip coating such as chip seal 3/8" X No. 6 for asphalt driveways as they cross over paths, or a roughening or scoring of concrete to provide a non-slip surface so horses and pedestrians can cross safely.

The Town staff, as well as members of the Pathway, Recreation & Parks Committee will gladly help with any questions on this matter. Please call Town Hall for further assistance at 941-7222.

Vector Control

The County of Santa Clara provides a program for the control of vectors, which include mosquitoes, rodents, ticks, fleas, and other animals capable of transmitting disease or causing injury to human beings. These services are available to residents of all 15 participating cities and unincorporated areas of the county.

Services Include:

- Community educational programs: Speakers available for schools, civic or business groups, and homeowners associations
- Rat control and advisory services
- Property inspection for vector problems
- Information and advice on control of vectors
- Mosquitofish planted in residential ponds (no charge)
- Mosquito surveillance and control activities
- Insect/animal/tick identification
- Surveillance for malaria, encephalitis and other vector-borne diseases
- Surveillance of public parks for ticks that can transmit Lyme disease
- Information and referral services

Cost: No charge – services supported through district funding

Hours: Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Funding is provided by a small service charge that is assessed annually on all non-exempt land parcels. The District is administered by Environmental Health Services of the Santa Clara County Health Department.

For more information please call (408) 299-2050.

New Site Analysis Process for Proposed Development in Town

The Town's hills and varied geography make it truly unique. The best development in Town takes advantage of geography to ensure that the beautiful views, natural vegetation, rural atmosphere, and openness of the Town are preserved.

As a result, the Town believes that better development and less controversy over proposed projects can result if the special characteristics of difficult and sensitive sites to be subdivided or developed are addressed before actual design is begun.

To achieve this end, the City Council recently approved the use of a "Site Analysis" process. This process has been designed to provide early guidance to potential owners, owners, developers, neighbors, and the Town itself on issues that may impact the planned development of a specific site.

Based on the topographic maps of the site, as well as photos and possibly photomontages, applicants for projects on sensitive sites will have an opportunity to meet with staff and Town officials to generate a list of site-specific concerns and development guidelines.

The proposed development's architect or designer will then understand the primary issues that will most likely have to be addressed in order for the development being proposed to achieve Town goals.

For more information, please contact the Town Planning Department at 941-7222.

Helping Police, Fire, and Ambulance Units to Find your Home

A request from the Sheriff's Department and Fire District

Time is precious in an emergency. There have been several recent cases where emergency units have been delayed in their responses because the driveway entrance did not clearly mark the street address of the property. You can help ensure that police, fire, and ambulance units get to you quickly by marking your entrance clearly for both day and night access.

In order to help everyone spot your number, but not encourage billboards, we recommend numbers painted on the edge of the road next to your driveway or a small wooden sign next to your driveway that sits close to the ground but is not obstructed by shrubs. In both cases, numbers should be 3 inches high and of reflective material. They should not be lit.

Los Altos Hills Historical Society Notes

Our December 9, 1990, "Historical Show and Tell" meeting was a huge success. Each person brought something of historical interest from home or family, and talked about it. Many positive comments after the meeting showed we had found a special method of bringing history to light for a lot of people. We will be repeating this event toward the end of the year.

Griffin House:

Several of us attended the January 7 meeting of the Foothill/De Anza College Board of Trustees to plead with them to save the only building in Los Altos Hills on the National Register of Historic Places. The final EIR will be ready in about a month, and the Board will vote on it late in February or early March.

Even with strong support from local residents and others interested in saving Griffin House Los Altos Hills City Council requests, and an offer of funds to study preservation alternatives from the National Register, the Board seems to be moving toward demolishing this unique structure. Anyone interested in the Griffin House should contact Foothill College and make their feelings known.

Staff Changes

There have been several important changes to the staff at Town Hall. The Town's City Manager, Tom Frutchey, was recently appointed City Manager of Campbell. We wish Tom good luck in his new position and welcome Richard DeLong as the Town's Acting City Manager. The City Council recently selected Norman Roberts and Associates as the recruiting firm for the City Manager selection. If anyone is interested in obtaining more information about the City Manager position please call Mr. Roberts at (213) 820-4600.

Ann Jamison, the Town's Planning Director, has also recently left her position here to pursue her Ph.D. The Town is presently accepting résumés for the position of Town Planner and if anyone is interested in this

(Continued on next page)

position they can call Town Hall for a job description.

In January, 1991, the City Council appointed Richard Huntington of Mayne Tree Expert Company as the Town's arborist. According to the Heritage Tree Ordinance approved by the City Council in 1990, an arborist was authorized to prepare a Plan of Protection for each tree being considered for designation as a Heritage Tree.

New Youth Commissioner

Dana Dolan, a senior at Pinewood High School in Los Altos Hills, was appointed to the volunteer position of Youth Coordinator in June, 1990, by the Council. The youth commissioner is an advocate for youth services, a liaison between the Town of Los Altos Hills and community service agencies, and Dana promotes and coordinates efforts for a drug-free environment. Dana works not only with the City Council, but also with the City Manager and City Clerk.

Over the past several months, Dana has attended meetings with Council and staff, the Santa Clara County Drug Advisory Board, and senior staff from the El Camino YMCA. A major project for Dana has been organizing a ski trip with the El Camino YMCA, which is scheduled for March 2, 1991. Al Los Altos Hills residents in grades 9–12 are invited to participate in this exciting day on the slopes at Sugar Bowl Ski Resort.

Another project Dana is participating in is the Gold Card Program to reward students for community involvement and academic achievement. Student who are recognized by their school will be able to obtain discounts at local stores and attractions.

If you have any ideas about future events for our Town's students, please contact the Youth Commissioner through Town hall. Also, if any students did not get on the student mailing list, please contact the City Clerk. (You would know if you are not on the list if you did not receive an invitation to the ski trip.)

Youth activities are important, and all Los Altos Hills students are invited to participate in future events. Please call Town Hall at 941-7222 for more information.

Town of Los Altos Hills
26379 Fremont Road
Los Altos Hills, California 94022

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More on Emergency Preparedness

Note: The following information was received too late for inclusion in this edition of the Town Newsletter. However, Town officials felt that the article was very informative and timely, so it is being added as an insert.

As the anniversary of the Loma Prieta earthquake approaches, the Town hopes all residents have taken extra measures to prepare for disasters, and all 35 designated emergency neighborhoods are encouraged to attain an appropriate level of organization.

- *Printed materials on emergency preparedness are available from Town Hall.*
- *A short video is available for neighborhood meetings.*
- *Town officials will be glad to meet with you to discuss important safety issues, as well as how the Town's emergency plan will work in the event of a declared disaster.*

There are many outside sources of assistance. Two excellent sources of up-to-date information are:

- *The brochure* The Next Big Earthquake..., *distributed in your newspapers a few weeks ago.*
- *The* Quake *article in the October 1990 issue of* Sunset *magazine.*

For more information, contact Town Hall at 941-7222.

Neighborhood 12 Report

Our Town's Neighborhood Emergency Network, established in 1985, designated 35 neighborhoods in order to achieve the best possible coordination of information and resources in the event of a natural disaster. Our Town officials have systems in place to respond to a major emergency, but it is up to us to organize our neighborhoods so that we can effectively communicate with the Emergency Operations Center, and efficiently obtain needed help and information. Our local resources range from the material (horses, construction equipment, 4-wheel-drive vehicles, car phones, swimming pools) to the professional (doctors, nurses, engineers, HAM radio operators). We are fortunate that Los Altos Hills has such an abundance of resources, because during an emergency we are going to have to depend on ourselves and each other first.

Neighborhood 12, coordinated by Rory and Dan Kaplan, has been very active in organizing for an emergency that we hope never occurs. The neighborhood consists of approximately 115 homes east of Foothill College, covering Dezahara Way, Byrne Park Lane, Deer Springs Way, Julietta Lane, Altamont Road between Appaloosa Way and Corbetta Lane, Moody Road between Tanglewood Lane and Chaparral Way, and Taaffe Road from Altamont down almost to Taaffe Lane.

In July we held our first organizational meeting. We divided our very large area into five sub-areas, with coordinators for each. In September we held a follow-up meeting, attended by Councilmember Barbara Tryon, that assessed the progress made, the work still to be done, and possible future plans and programs.

One of the results of the July meeting was the creation of a questionnaire that was distributed to every home in Neighborhood 12. The questionnaire requested information on topics such as each family's needs, skills, equipment resources, and the home's physical plant. A confidential inventory is being compiled from the returned questionnaires, and will be maintained by the coordinators.

Another result of our July session was a meeting for Neighborhood 12 residents with the Fire Marshal (Captain Mordecai) of the Los Altos Fire Department. That meeting covered topics ranging from fire safety issues to the proposed new fire station for the Page Mill Road area. (Los Altos Hills residents should note that the Fire Department will do free home inspections on a scheduled basis.)

Our neighborhood group is also discussing other possible ideas. These extend from red and green flags for every home that could be placed on mailboxes after a catastrophic event to indicate that family's post-emergency status, to walking each other's property to see the location of gas and water lines, electrical load centers, potential slide areas, etc.

Future Neighborhood 12 meetings may include a session with our designated HAM radio operator and possibly arranging a mock disaster drill. An idea necessitated by disaster has resulted in the pleasures of getting to know neighbors and of making new friends.

Written by Rory Kaplan, Sandy Harapat, and Laurie Haron